

to Paris, Texas, where, so I've  
been told, they grow roses  
pretty enough for flower shows,  
and cottonwood and pecan trees.  
I'd like to see fireflies and  
buttermilk skies, compare the  
rocks, leaves and dirt of Paris  
to those in Long Beach.

Other than the winter when  
I was born I've only been  
to Paris once, and on the way,  
right in the middle of Texas  
near Denton or Sweetwater, someplace  
in the middle of the night and  
where there's not a tree or  
hill, just flat land falling  
off the thousand corners of the earth  
my father parked the car  
on the side of the road  
and he, my mother and I  
got out to look at the stars,  
the sky a big, round dome full of  
so many sugar-crystal stars that  
the sky dripped white as cake icing  
and my father stood in front  
of the car lights as if on a stage  
and sang that song which should be  
Texas' state song, sang as loud  
as he could into the big, round night,  
"The stars at night are big and bright,"  
and then he clapped his hands 5 times  
and went on singing,  
"deep in the heart of Texas...."

#### NEPENTHE

My father always said that my  
mother was so pretty because she  
was a Texas girl and Texas had the  
most pretty women in the whole world  
and this would please my mother so  
and make her smile she'd let him  
embrace her in front of me, she'd  
sit on his lap, no mention ever  
that when a Texas girl she'd  
picked cotton, wore flour sack dresses  
and couldn't go to school winters  
because she had no shoes, the bad  
and the sad things never mattering,  
the hard times easy as Eden  
once you're grown and pretty  
and sitting on a happy man's knee.